

Committee on Government Reform
Tom Davis, Chairman



MEDIA ADVISORY

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**Government Reform Committee to Examine Social,
Economic, and Health Issues Facing Black Men and Boys in
the District of Columbia and other Metropolitan Areas
*Former Redskins Star Charles Mann Among Those to Testify***

**What: COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
OVERSIGHT HEARING: "BLACK MEN AND BOYS IN THE DISTRICT OF
COLUMBIA AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE FUTURE OF THE BLACK FAMILY."**

When: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2003, 10 a.m.

Where: ROOM 2154, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

Background:

In an effort to address problems facing young African American men in the District of Columbia and other metropolitan areas, the Committee will examine social, economic, and health-related problems of African American men and boys. The hearing is an outgrowth of the work of the District of Columbia Commission on Black Men and Boys (the "Commission").

The purpose of the hearing is to examine issues the Commission has been exploring and help the Commission develop a final action plan to be carried out by government, business, labor, and the community. Specifically, witnesses will:

- Discuss problems endemic to black men in the District of Columbia and the country;
- Assess the effectiveness to date of governmental responses to these problems, including whether "one-stop shop" efforts funded by the Department of Labor to coordinate existing programs could be applied to the issues raised in the hearing and by the Commission; and

- Identify sources of government, private sector, community and other assistance that can best improve opportunities for young black men in the District and across the country.

Black men and boys in the District of Columbia and across the country face an unprecedented combination of serious social, economic, and health challenges. For example, in 2002, the national unemployment rate of the civilian noninstitutional population was 5.8%, while for black men the rate was 10.8%. In 1999, the national average death rates due to firearms for all adolescent males age 15 to 19 was 14.7 per 100,000, but was 67.9 per 100,000 for black males in that age range. Further, 50% of all U.S. jail inmates and about half of all AIDS-HIV cases are black males.

Concerned about the deterioration of black family life and the disproportionately serious problems of black males, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton worked with the Joint Center for Political and Economic Development to obtain funding to establish the District of Columbia Commission on Black Men and Boys. The purpose of the Commission is to draw upon community experience and expert testimony to understand the impediments to success that African American young men and boys face, identify opportunities to improve services from the government and private sector, and propose a concrete plan of action to help overcome these obstacles. The Commission will produce an action plan that aims to be useful not only to federal agencies but also to local jurisdictions that may want to establish similar commissions.

The 12-member Commission is comprised of men in the D.C. community who work or volunteer directly with black boys or men. An Advisory Board with a variety of scholarly and practical expertise on issues relating to young black men supports the Commission. Since its establishment in 2001, the Commission has held three community town hall hearings that have addressed issues concerning education and training, the importance of family, mentors and role models, and the criminal justice system.

As part of the Commission's work, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies completed a report in February 2002 on *Youth Development Needs and Capacities in the District of Columbia*. This report examined indicators of need for youth development services in the District, and found there is inadequate coordination of services to young black men in the District.

II. WITNESSES

The Committee expects to hear from the following witnesses:

- **Charles Mann**, former star of the Washington Redskins and, along with his former teammate Art Monk, a co-founder of the D.C.-based Good Samaritan Foundation, a non-profit youth development group that helps young people achieve education and leadership goals. Participants in the Foundation's after-school and summer programs are pursuing post-secondary education at institutions including Stanford University, the University of Pittsburgh, and Florida State University. Mr. Mann also has worked for the National Kidney Foundation, the United Way, Ronald McDonald's Children Charities

and the Read to Achieve program. Mr. Mann, who is a TV and radio sports reporter and co-founder of a credit card processing company based in Vienna, Virginia, will discuss the work of the Good Samaritan Foundation in helping black boys overcome obstacles to academic success.

- **Dr. William Julius Wilson**, Lewis P. and Linda L. Geyser University Professor at Harvard University. A renowned sociologist, his work includes examining social and economic factors that contribute to urban poverty. His findings have stressed employment as the key to decreasing poverty, crime, substance abuse, family instability, and other problems in urban communities. Professor Wilson is expected to discuss his scholarship and provide an overview of problems facing black men and boys in the District of Columbia.

- **Robin Gwathney**, Project Manager at the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. Ms. Gwathney has experience and expertise in evaluating youth programs and providing technical assistance to community-based organizations. She managed the U.S. Department of Labor's One-Stop Promising Practices initiative seeking innovative and successful efforts under the Workforce Investment Act. She will testify concerning the common elements of successful one-stop service centers and the utility of the one-stop as a tool to address comprehensively the needs of black men and boys in the District of Columbia.

- **Dr. Jay Cummings**, Dean of the College of Education at Texas Southern University, a historically black institution. A father of four boys and an expert in educational programs that prepare students to enter the workforce, Dr. Cummings served as director of technical and vocational education programs for the State of Texas and president of the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education. His testimony is expected to focus on effective workforce education programs that could serve as models for the needs of young black men and boys in the District of Columbia. He is also expected to testify about the need for collaboration among schools, local businesses, and civic and religious organizations.

- **Paul A. Quander**, Director of the District of Columbia Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), which in 1997 acquired the operational responsibilities for former District Agencies in charge of probation and parole and pretrial services. CSOSA's mission is to increase public safety, prevent crime, reduce recidivism, and support the fair administration of justice in collaboration with the community. Mr. Quander is a former Assistant U.S. Attorney and also served as Chief of the Seventh District Major Crimes Homicide Section and as Deputy Director for the D.C. Department of Corrections. Mr. Quander is expected to discuss CSOSA's role in preparing men to reestablish themselves in society while on parole or probation.

- **George Starke**, Chairman of the D.C. Commission on Black Men and Boys and former star of the Washington Redskins who is founder and president of the Excel Institute, a

two-year workplace skills program located at the University of the District of Columbia. The Excel Institute provides basic literacy education, automotive job skills training, workplace counseling, and on-the-job training to students seeking a career in the automotive industry. Mr. Starke is a graduate of Columbia University and a native Washingtonian, As Chair of the Commission he has officiated at each of the three town meetings held by the Commission. Mr. Starke will provide a personal perspective on life as a black male in Washington, describe the achievements of, and challenges faced by, the Excel Institute, and brief the Committee on the activities of the Black Men and Boys Commission to date.

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